

## FABLES

### i. "The Man With a Principle"

Once there was a man who labored under a heavy principle. He owned a large corporation and was called by his initials. When asked what his principle was, he invariably replied, "That some men should work and others should boss." But what, he was asked one day, if your principle turns out to be a wrong one? His answer was simple: "I'll still have controlling interest, won't I?"

MORAL: If you must labor under a principle, pick one you can live with.

### ii. "The Unattractive Girl"

Once there was a very unattractive girl. As she walked to school every day, the boys would ride by in their fancy cars and shout at her. The girl's face would burn at the obscene remarks, but she knew she was living in an enlightened age of woman's equality, so she would call back to them: "Someday I'll become a surgeon and cut all your hearts out!" She worked very hard, taking dictation for a lecherous older man to put herself through medical school, and did, indeed, many years later, become a surgeon. And a renowned one, to boot. One day one of the boys became gravely ill and came under her knife. As he lay on the table, not yet anesthetized, the girl bent over him and, smiling expectantly, said, "Well, Manny, what do you think of me now?" The man looked up at her blankly: "Who the hell are you?" Afterward, over coffee, several doctors sat discussing the case. "What went wrong?" they asked her. She sipped her coffee and replied coolly: "His heart failed."

MORAL: If you like to ridicule homely girls, you're probably an anachronism.

### iii. "Husbands and Wives"

When the ladies all gathered for bridge, and talked racily and disdainfully of their spouses' suspected infidelities, Marcy Love would clear her throat and stare nervously at her cards. "You're lucky," they would tell her, "to have a husband who stays home with you." Finally, the doubt grew too great for her. She sought out an old girlfriend, now a loose woman, previously a loose teen-ager (and, Marcy imagined, before that a loose child). The plan was this: the friend would try to tempt Marcy's husband into adultery. Her

husband was indeed tempted. But he had sworn to be faithful to his wife -- and besides, he still, after all these years, found her quite alluring. With not a small degree of regret, he said no -- he would remain true to the woman he loved. When Marcy heard of this, she was crushed. "What did I marry?" she cried out in despair. "A eunuch?" She gave up bridge and began living a hermitlike existence. She ignored all her husband's concerned inquiries and refused to answer the phone. At length, unable even to eat, she wasted away. At the funeral, her husband was inconsolable. "All I ever wanted," he moaned over and over, "Was for her to be happy!" The husbands scowled at this, and their women all bowed their heads and blushed for his poor dead wife.

MORAL: You're damned if you do and damned if you don't.

-- David Hall

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#### THE INNKEEPER OF "THE STAG"

-- translated from Spessart Sagen (Aschaffenburg, 1972)

Many, many years ago in the Lohr inn, "The Stag," there was an innkeeper who mixed water in his wine and sold it as pure vintage. One day three men, small and sporting long beards, came into the tavern. Each of the little fellows ordered a good half pint of wine, and what did the innkeeper do? As usual, he poured water in the wine and brought the brimming glasses to the table.

But the three men were of the race of dwarfs and recognized the swindle right away. They winked at one another, nodded earnestly, and the first one said out loud: "The wine-faker must come inside." The innkeeper jumped to attention behind the bar. "Who should come inside?" he asked. "That thief of an innkeeper," said the second dwarf abruptly, even louder than the first. "Inside where should he come?" jeered the innkeeper of "The Stag." "Inside the crock," cried the third in a thunderous voice, and instantly the innkeeper was banished into a huge wine crock.

Then the dwarfs dragged it outside into the forest and buried it beneath a tall tree. And in fact many a person passing by there has heard the wailing of the old innkeeper of "The Stag." But no one has ever found the right word to save him.